



## Cultural diplomacy: Soft Power Strategy of India and South Korea

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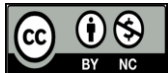
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### Abstract

India and South Korea enjoy a connection nowadays which has been formed through both strategic and historical components. The connection goes beyond official diplomacy. Buddhism has come to Korea via India centuries back, developing strong ethical and cultural links. The feeling of trust that lives on today was built with these fundamental values.

Each nation restored these cultural ties in the past several decades to offer help in modern-day relations. Cultural diplomacy has become known as a essential weapon for encouraging unity as well as confidence. This research addresses why culture helps long term goals though Melissen's new public diplomacy framework and Joseph Nye's theory of soft power. This highlights how India and South Korea benefit from cultural ideational to strengthen their bond. The shift is made clear due to real-world scenarios. Educational collaborations, joint creativity programs and youth- related activities are managed though The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and The Korean Cultural Centre (KCC). These type of activities have an impact of connecting people closer and creating greater understanding. Due to friendly good will , bilateral trade among India and South Korea hit over USD 27 billion in 2023. Under partnerships such as the 2010 Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the 2019 logistics pacts for naval cooperation, these two nations are also working together in science, technology and defence.

The involvement of the public has increased because of interaction with culture on internet and online platforms. Indian yoga celebration in Seoul and Busan, K-pop and Korean films indicate how true diplomatic achievement could come from common cultural connection. Ongoing interactions increase confidence, which helps Indo-Pacific security and economic goals. In line with the study, culture as well as strategy were complimentary. Loyalty, respect, affection and common beliefs or ideals are the basic principles of successful interaction between nations. Cultural diplomacy is an effective tools for peace and development like shown by India and South Korea. Towards those countries who want powerful people-centered interaction in Indo-Pacific area, their alliance can serve as a case in point.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, India and South Korea relations, cultural diplomacy, Strategic importance, Indo-pacific.

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## **Introduction**

The Republic of Korea and India act as proof of how culture impact modern diplomacy. Their relationship reach outside politics and economic. Strategy continues to be affected through the relationship's long history. In modern times, diplomacy is carried out on the internet, during cultural venues, and within educational institutions. Cultural is becoming symbolic and significant. It refers to an instrument of collaboration as well as strategy. The faith of Buddhism, and moral values along with post-colonial modernization have all significantly contributed to each of those countries' combined Asian culture. The foundation of trust in each other has been created though these common principles.

The legend of Queen Suriratna of Ayodhya, commonly referred to by the name Queen Heo Hwang-ok of Korea, describes the way initial connections between cultures have affected understanding right through decades. These connections have been strengthened through the expansion in Buddhism across India to Korea. Each government's current strategy towards cooperation are still affected by the past few days.

In 1973, full diplomatic ties were set. After that time, mutual cultural and strategic initiatives have consolidated the partnerships. Trade, education, defense and technology cooperation improved through South Korea's New Southern Policy and India's Act East Policy. The bilateral trade reached over USD 27 billion during 2023. Major defence and logistics agreements, like naval pact in 201, have also been reached between the two nations. In cultivating trust and respect between people, cultural diplomacy encourages these beneficial outcomes. Organizations such as the Korean Cultural Centre (KCC) as well as The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) proved critically important. They organize joint festivals, language initiatives, including exchanges between students. These initiatives promote ongoing sentiments and strengthen connectivity together with the people as whole. As India, Korean media, especially K-pop and K- drama, are getting very popular. Indian yoga, films and literature are also achieving the popularity in Korea.

These cross-cultural interactions improve cooperation and reduce the gap in society. This achievement has been justified under the concept of soft power. On the basis of Joseph Nye(2004)

power can now become achieved through attractiveness compared to force or violence. Public diplomatic activity is carried out by both governments to create strong connections. South Korea's creativity and cultural exports are enhanced due to India's democratic principles as well as cultural diversity. Their cooperation remains stable and healthy as well as progressive due to the combination between both of them. Trust and confidence can be established more quickly by culture in comparison to policy guidelines. This supports long-term cooperation as well as partnership and offers diplomatic in term of individual aspect. The partnerships among South Korea and India highlights the way cultural awareness and a common heritage could function as beneficial to security as well as strategically for nations within the Indo-Pacific region.

### **Origin Transform in Strategic Interest**

One of the oldest cultural connections across the Asian region exist between the India and South Korea. Their collaboration evolved though significant connection to the past instead of through modern strategic interest. One of the initial popular connections is the story of Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya, also known as Queen Heo Hwang-ok in Korea. She came from India to South Korea during the first century BCE, as per to Korean sources. The initial thing display of cultural interaction within these two nations is expressed from their marriage to King Kim Suro ( Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). The bond which remains strong nowadays has it intellectual as well as emotional and symbolic origin within the current situation.

Around the 4th and 5th centuries CE, the faith of Buddhism developed the relationship more strongly. Religious manuscripts, art work and Indian monks and scholars. South Korea's ethical as well as civic and cultural identity has been developed through these interactions. South Korea's cultural, intellectual and religious beliefs have been influenced via Indian cultural civilization. Both cultures continue to interact intellectual due to the spread of Buddhism. These fundamental moral and ethical or intellectual ideas have encouraged lifelong trust and mutual respect for contemporary diplomacy.

Both of them South Korea in 1948 and India in 1947 came across similar challenges right after gaining independence. They were looking to offer stability or peace of mind, advance educational opportunities, and reconstruct their economy. Their current partnership was formed by their initial empathy and respect for other people's suffering. The year 1973, diplomatic links were created as an outcome of many years of similar events and mutually beneficial goals. Present foreign policy

continue to be affected through culture. The exchanges in artwork, language, and education are set up by organizations such as The Korean Cultural Centre (KCC) and The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Both of them hosted joint cultural festivals, exhibitions, and academic forums in 2023 in the honour of the 50th anniversary of diplomats relations. These efforts promote collaboration in trade, science and technology alongside restoring shared origin.

The two nations began to transform their cultural connections towards an alliance of strategic importance in the late 1990s. Following the spirit of India's liberalization and Look East Policy, which ultimately developed becoming The Act East Policy, South Korea emphasised innovation exporting (Kesavan, 2020; ORF, 2023). Political and economic relationships have been boosted via this combination. On the top of that, it explored how Cultural awareness stimulates long-term strategic cooperation. From younger activities, media, and education as well as cultural interaction continue to grow becoming greater. Although Indian yoga ,philosophies and cinema excite to Korean citizens, Korean films, food and music are growing more popular in India. (Basu, 2025). According to UNESCO's Science Report (2021), almoia.2,000 Indian students join Korean Universities because of scholarships and academic exchanges. These focuses on people engagements encourage understanding, knowledge and dignity, which helps and improve government partnerships.

Korea's history of originality and adaptability seems similar to India's story of freedom and cultural variety (Desai,2023; Kim, 2021). As opposed to considering cultural diplomacy as simply a symbolic means, both nations are now thinking of the practice as an effective strategic tool. The Indo-Pacific that makes up continent's long-term peace and security, as well as regional consensus, and coordination of policies all of them are based on their shared heritage.

### **Culture as the Basis of Diplomacy**

The hyperlink within India and South Korea continue to be softly strengthened through culture. It shifts individual viewpoints, encourages trust, beliefs and inspires sustained interaction. On the basis of Joseph Nye's, soft power depends on attractiveness rather than force and aggression. This attraction is originates via mutual respect, common principles and longstanding connections among the India and South Korea. The key component that underlies their participation has become Cultural Diplomacy, indicating that mutually beneficial cooperation depends on interpersonal, social and emotional connections instead of just agreements or commercial

transaction. The intellectual ambitions of both countries are quite similar. Korea's "Hongik Ingan," which roughly means "The welfare of all mankind," has similarities to India's "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which means "The world is one family." These judgements constitute their diplomacy and ethical foundation.

Soon after gain independence, India began to develop its Cultural Diplomacy. Founded in 195, The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) advanced Indian Culture using discussions, education and arts. South Korea adopted an alternative path. The growth of Hallyu, as well as the Korean Wave, in the 1990s shifted its mainstream popular culture through a worldwide phenomenon. Korea's image for creative thinking and innovation has become demonstrated using K-pop, movies and styles as well as the latest trends. Both of these models indicate how strategic management of culture benefits national identity and diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy obtained an official framework using both the establishment of The Korean Cultural Centre in New Delhi and The Indian Cultural Centre in Seoul. These establishment offer film festivals, art exhibits and language instruction. They empower Individuals to get acquainted intimately with one another's cultures. These programs engage common people participants in diplomacy.

These cultural initiatives have been extended under Korea's New Southern Policy and India's Act East Policy. As an opportunity of improving regional cooperation, both strategy enhance relationship among individual. (Kesavan, 2020; Carnegie Endowment, 2021) Organizations that involve religion and heritage, especially The Temple Diplomacy program (2023), highlight the mutual Buddhist traditions can encourages understanding across nations boundaries. Cultural tourism and collaborative projects for restoration build on these connections. A different aspect has been included via cuisine diplomacy. Joint projects like research and food festivals have transformed become engagement platforms. Indian vegetarian cuisine and spices getting more and more popular in Korea, though Korean food includes bibimbap and kimchi are regarded favourably in Indian cities. These exchanges between cultures increase a sense of comfort between group of people.

Among Indian youngsters, Hallyu has also proven to produce a major effect on them. Lover societies along with community group of students across Indian colleges have been significantly affected by K-pop and K-dramas. This grassroots intensity generates an architecture about ongoing friendship and sustain official diplomacy. Activities like International Yoga Day, ICCR cultural

scholarships and public outreach programs such as Swachh Bharat Mission represent exactly how India cultivates culture to attract the public and build up a good impression.

Nowadays, both governments recognise soft power primary a one of the most important aspects of foreign policy. India's strength originates due to its democratic ideals as well as principles and the depth of cultural development. Korea's current creative spirit and cultural growth are contributing to its spreading position. They work together to create an effective and fruitful soft power combination. Their working together showed how long-lasting peace and mutual development can happen via diplomacy based on a shared cultural values. India and South Korea stand as examples of the way culture is not merely casual but instead acts as the foundation of sustained international connections.

### **Reframing Soft Power towards Strategic Trust Assets**

India and South Korea have transformed their interaction become an actual alliance of strategic importance. Whenever used as strategic assets, soft power pushes this transformation. Trade, politics, technology and defence are becoming more fuelled by culture, education and human relationships. Around Asia, these two nations depends on culture as an asset or means of connection and mutual confidence or trust. Soft power, on the other hand being an asset not a fad it's desire against pressure or violence, as defined by Joseph Nye. In modern times, it functions as wealth for security, growth in economy, and diplomacy. K-Pop, movies and digital media really help in maintain South Korea's global image and produce billions of dollars each year. The influence of India is strengthened because of its cultural heritage, democracy and the global diaspora or community.

Since they respect and understand values one another, their work together would be effective and reliable. Actual trust is built, connection gets less difficult, and mutual respect keeps going by way of cultural exchange. Trade reached USD 27 billion in the year2023. Overall tourism and the total amount of students remains on the rise. Each day links within Korean professionals in India and Indian students in Korea inspire trust, respect and decision-making. Thoughts are transformed towards achievement by the means of Public Diplomacy. The UNESCO Science Report focuses working together in energy from renewable sources, machine learning (AI), and technology (ICT). Universities as well as commercial enterprises are linked by carried out research ties. These initiatives demonstrate the way information diplomacy relates soft power to beneficial outcomes.

Institutions construct a strong foundation to gain a relationship of confidence. Indian literature, arts and language are being actively supported in Korea due to The India Council for Cultural Relations. Korean language, music and food are provided with regularly at the Korean Cultural Center in New Delhi. Educational programs or activities and film festivals take place in embassies. By doing these direct and personal interactions, people become Cultural ambassadors and ordinary diplomacy gets enriched. The coordination among the government protects the partnership. The Joint Commission, a non-profit organization, and annual meetings and summits are two distinct methods where India and South Korea interact with one another. From Culture to security working together, their 2010 Strategic Partnership indicate ongoing improvement. Open market and shared democracy enhance reliability or consistency.

The next level has been created through research and education. Think-tank and exchanges between students are made possible under The Indian Council of World Affairs. Such efforts create young leaders who actually have connections and knowledgeable and skilled. On a daily basis engagement is supported as civic standards. India's citizen-led authority operates in agreement with Korea's peaceful civic culture and society. Mutual trust can be maintained via moral behaviour and public ethics in society. Every aspect of the above is interconnected together by Public Diplomacy. By doing so activity and full disclosure, it promotes linkages among citizens and government. Cooperation turns sustainable when each strategy based itself on trust. Soft power, properly utilized especially strategic confidence capital, generates long-term stability, security and flexibility in the Indo-Pacific, to be demonstrated between India and South Korea.

### **The Digital Links of Cultural Strategy**

In today's world digital and educational communication networks serve as tools to feed Cultural Diplomacy. Exhibitions and live performance are currently the only possible opportunities for it to appear. India and South Korea have become significantly more interconnected than ever before due to media and educational institutions. Indian viewers are highly engaged in Korean Dramas, Cinema, Cuisine and Pop Culture. Bollywood, Yoga and Indian Dance culture are also enjoyed over Korean viewers. Mutual understanding and respect are encouraged by this sort of relationship. Culture using now function just like a means of communication through generations and countries

because of digital platforms. India and South Korea rely on media and technology to order to reach new fresh audiences and strengthen cultural relations.

Diplomacy has become more rapid, more personal or intimately, and more welcoming because of these new digital tools. Hallyu, frequently referred to as the Korean Wave, represents how culture propagate over the internet. Millions of people in India enjoy Korean dramas, music and internet-based contents. Cultural activities, language centers and group of fans keep on to getting bigger every year. This has strengthened diplomacy via creating emotional relationship. K-pop celebrities right now act like cultural ambassadors, boosting Korea's reputation worldwide. Seoul's economic growth and global strategy ultimately heavily depends on the Korean Cultural market.

Another powerful digital connection is education. Young people may acquire knowledge approximately each other's societies by conducting scholarship, student exchanges and university collaborative efforts. The next generation of leaders who interact one another and consider globally are formed due to these kinds of experience. Learning, creativity and openness to cultural have been promoted by India's ' Digital India' and 'Study in India' initiatives. Indian and Korean universities works together on technology, commercial and cultural research projects and joint distance learning programs. Cross-border education is readily available and continuous because to jointly organised workshops or conferences and virtual learning platforms. This electronic connections get even strengthen through media collaboration and partnership. News, entertainment, and documentaries films are broadcast via Indian and South Korean companies these discussions assist people understand actual stories from both viewpoints and reduce misconceptions.

Indian reports on Korean culture and Korean streams on Indian customs highlights how both countries merge modern lifestyles with rich history. This digital trust and confidence is also reflected in defence and trade collaboration. The 2010 signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) shows how cultural awareness enhances Economic strategy. The talks became quicker and more fruitful whenever there was an air of mutual goodwill and sentiments. Cooperation in defence, technology and Indo-Pacific security is currently determined by the same trust and respect. Strategy has been reinforced by culture rather than replaced by its

absence. In progress exchange of cultures promote stability and peace of mind, which thus make it easier for both countries to deal with challenges defence or political issues.

Official discussions are created easier if there is already exists, social trust and confidence among societies. India and South Korea proven that digital cultural diplomacy is strategic instead of symbolic. It sustains advancement strengthen alliances, increase emotional capital. In the digital age the partnership provides an example of how two countries could turn cultural links into permanent strategic strength.

### **The Way towards Strategic Future**

India and South Korea experience a strong engagement that is founded on mutual respect for one another, trust and heritage. Their diplomacy has generally been determined by culture. The wealth could possibly be insufficient in the current environment. When people have trust or confidence and understand their fellow citizens, bond or partnership stay strong. This trust gets strengthened by cultural customs or beliefs. Soft power gets a boost via civic activities. Clean public areas, faithfulness to the law or constitution and affection in day-to-day activities express to the world how kind of society you are the part of. India's moral, ethical and cultural image strengthen worldwide when its citizens behave responsibly and respectfully.

The problem nowadays for both nations is to bring together their common pasts with their ambitions for the years to come. The fundamental principles of this activity will remain to serve as cultural diplomacy. India and South Korea have moved on through cultural ties to strategic partnership during more than fifty years. Their overall experience highlights how, especially built around mutual respect and confidence or trust, soft power may transform into long lasting strategic strength. Turning cultural awareness towards meaningful or valuable working relationships is the final stage. There are three primary domains need to be centre of attention:

**Institutional interaction:** private agencies, think tank, and government need for them to collaborate jointly far more closely. Their cultural diplomacy would need to have goals in step using higher level foreign policy objectives. For example, collaborating efforts between The Korea Foundation and India's ICCR might give training for future artists and diplomats or policymakers.

**Cultural creativeness:** Multiple sided cooperation is remains necessary. Global visibility can increased via joint production of films, digital contents and educational programs. Integrating the animation and design fields in Korea and India may outcome in integrated cultural assets that have an important impact on the world.

**People-centered Diplomacy:** Teamwork is achieved by means of interactions among researchers, students and city-level associates. For example, roughly 300 students from both nations engaged in the 2023 India-Korea Youth Forum, which resulted in New fresh green environment friendly technology innovation objectives.

Cultural trust also happens to be an essential component for strategic collaboration with regards to creating technological innovation. Connectivity in digital infrastructure, green eco-friendly energy and semiconductors should promote transparency and moral engagements. This above approach, advances additionally, moral integrity or reliability as well as progress in the economy. In the finals of present day global scenario, acknowledgement, or respect verbal memories rather compare to superiority. The primary means of Power, India and South Korea having the responsibility to work together on stories like this beyond as Asia. The strategy is bounded Jointly through civilization customs. Relationships stay healthy and strong when information keep going. Both countries collaborative efforts will extend beyond diplomatic gestures and demonstrate a template of the regional leadership whenever they integrate civic ethics, cross-cultural awareness and strategic planning.

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